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Promoting social integration

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report was prepared in response to Economic and Social Council resolution 2008/19, in which the Council decided that the priority theme for the 2009-2010 review and policy cycle of the Commission for Social Development should be "Social integration", taking into account its relationships with poverty eradication and full employment and decent work for all. The report provides an overview of current social integration policies and obstacles to their implementation. It focuses on redistributive, anti-discriminatory and participatory policies promoting social integration and concludes with recommendations for future action.

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I. Introduction

1. At the World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen from 6 to 12 March 1995, Governments made a commitment to promote social integration through fostering inclusive societies that are stable, safe, just and tolerant, respect diversity and promote equality of opportunity and participation of all people, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons. Social integration was thus endorsed as the overall framework for advancing social development and social policymaking.

2. Despite that commitment, the goal of creating "a society for all" has remained elusive. Although there have been some advances since the Copenhagen Summit, societies are still far from being stable, just and equal. Contrary to the principles of social justice, millions of people are unable to meet their basic needs and remain disempowered and voiceless.

3. Social trends such as changing family size and living arrangements, migration and urbanization and the HIV/AIDS pandemic have led to a weakening of family and traditional support networks. While full employment and decent work are recognized as central to social inclusion, casual and informal jobs and long-term unemployment are increasingly the norm rather than the exception.

4. Social relations are often marked by racism, ageism and prejudice. Abuse, violence and exploitation towards those at the margins of society remain widespread and have not been adequately addressed. Gender-based discrimination, the most prevalent form of institutionalized inequality, continues to obstruct social inclusion efforts. The situation of indigenous and older women is especially critical, as they are subjected to multiple forms of discrimination, violence and neglect.

5. Decades of actions based on the assumption that policies aimed at increasing economic growth and expanding markets would simultaneously advance social development have shown that sometimes the opposite is true. Although there have been limited attempts to make economic growth pro-poor and more inclusive, economic policies have often been pursued with little regard for social consequences such as greater levels of inequality and insecurity.

6. Social integration policies have been developed on a piecemeal basis, concentrating mostly on the advancement of certain social groups. This focused approach has had a limited effect on the social advancement of groups, as their participation in the design and monitoring of policies relating to their well-being is still inadequate. Normative prescriptions have seldom been accompanied by implementation and evaluation frameworks, and this has further impeded the actual progress of group-specific instruments.

7. The current global economic and financial crisis, coming on the heels of the food and energy crisis, is likely to have disastrous and prolonged social impacts. Rising unemployment, cuts in social spending and diminished access to credit contribute to greater poverty and inequality and are more likely to affect the most vulnerable and marginalized persons in society. Faced with diminishing resources and growing hardship, people are less able to invest in the nutrition, health and education of their children, thus reinforcing the intergenerational transmission of poverty and exclusion. Socio-economic instability may lead to growing social tension and unrest, jeopardizing social cohesion.

8. To advance social integration, political leaders should articulate a clear vision of inclusiveness within the specific context of their society and mobilize collective social will to support this vision. In order to realize this vision, it is necessary to: (a) adopt a coherent approach to economic and social policymaking; (b) identify and remove the barriers and obstacles that prevent the economic, social and civic participation of certain social groups and individuals; and (c) frame social policy within a process of participation and accountability.

9. The present report provides an overview of existing policies to promote social integration and the obstacles to their implementation. It focuses on the current economic, social and civic participation policies to foster social integration and highlights regional and national priorities and strategies for inclusion. The report emphasizes the importance of redistributive, anti-discriminatory and participatory policies to advance social integration and concludes with specific recommendations for action-oriented policies to build socially cohesive societies.

II. Overview of existing policies promoting social integration and obstacles to their implementation

10. There are no blueprints for successful social integration policies, or a "one size fits all" approach. Following the Social Summit, Governments pursued a variety of approaches to fight different forms of exclusion and promote social integration. Policies focused on either promoting social and civic participation or improving economic inclusion through better access to labour markets. Often, such policies targeted specific groups in an effort to implement commitments enshrined in existing international instruments. Despite those efforts, by and large national comprehensive strategies have yet to be developed and implemented.

A. Approaches to promoting social, civic and economic participation

Social and civic participation

11. To increase participation and political inclusion, many Governments have improved their engagement with communities through administrative and political decentralization to local authorities; decision-making is more likely to be focused at the community or municipal level and involve participatory tools such as community needs assessments, citizens' councils, public dialogues and consultations. These are supported by dedicated interactive websites or e-government initiatives. Such initiatives offer useful additions to the system of political representation through the electoral process and offer greater opportunities for direct participation by people as citizens, residents or service users.

12. Participatory planning and management in local governance is increasingly seen as vital for the success of social inclusion strategies, which typically include poverty reduction as a major component. "Community engagement" strategies, where local government and local communities plan the development of local services, may evolve over time into "community empowerment", where citizens can make decisions about the delivery of public services. Participatory budgeting is an example of a best practice in this area. Assessments indicate that participatory budgeting can lead to a shift in the local political culture from confrontational

tactics and corrupt political bargaining to constructive debate and civic engagement in governance.[1] In Latin America, participatory budgeting has been implemented in approximately 200 cities in Brazil, as well as in Argentina, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru and Uruguay. Cities in other parts of the world have experimented with the process as well.[2] Statistical analysis of participatory budgeting in Brazil indicates that it increases the share of public expenditure devoted to health care and results in major reductions in child mortality and improved access to basic services.

13. Lack of participation may be a consequence of spatial exclusion, particularly in urban settings. Policies that address spatial exclusion have focused primarily on improving physical infrastructure, including transportation and housing for poorer communities. In this regard, the measures taken typically enhance security of tenure, provide housing subsidies and adequate basic utilities, and offer free basic services. Often, policies addressing spatial exclusion also offer training to improve employability and to empower underrepresented groups to participate in decision-making. Such schemes may also contribute to reducing levels of crime.

14. Recognized by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme as a best practice, the redevelopment of Cato Manor in Durban, South Africa, is an example of inclusive urban planning for social integration aimed at reducing socio-economic inequalities in cities. In addition to providing housing and sustainable urban infrastructure, the project included parallel supportive programmes for the development of social facilities, including schools, libraries, parks, sports centres, playgrounds and community health clinics. It also supported communication tools, including a community newspaper, radio station and website. This model formed the basis for other reconstruction initiatives in South Africa.[3]

Economic participation

15. Economic inclusion is central to social integration, and employment strategies have been implemented to improve employability at different stages in life through education and training. Such policies have focused on removing discriminatory barriers to employment such as those based on race, ethnicity, age, disability or gender, which can prevent people from actively participating in the labour market or discourage them from seeking employment. Efforts to improve employability through improved education and training have also been initiated. Employers have been offered incentives to hire young workers, older workers, workers with disabilities or the long-term unemployed. Training in entrepreneurship and action to facilitate self-employment, including increased access to credit, have encouraged greater economic participation.

Group-specific responses

16. Issues and concerns specific to certain groups continue to be insufficiently considered in overall development planning and overlooked in the monitoring of development activities. In some instances, group-specific issues are simply not part of the development agenda. For example, although older persons are generally more likely to live in extreme poverty than the rest of the population, their concerns are

[1] Inter-American Development Bank, "Assessment of participatory budgeting in Brazil", 2005, p. 4.
[2] Ibid., p. 11.
[3] UN-Habitat, *State of the World's Cities 2008/2009: Harmonious Cities*.

rarely part of the development agenda in the developing world.[4] Only a small number of Governments report on the situation of specific social groups, and few reports provide consistent, disaggregated data for such groups. Comparable data is currently available only in a small number of areas, such as education and employment. Without group-specific data that is comparable across countries and regions, it is difficult to assess progress in promoting the social inclusion of different groups and the effectiveness of the associated policies.

17. Despite increasing reference to the need to empower social groups and to enable their participation in the design and implementation of policies that affect them at the national and local levels, actual efforts remain limited. Attempts have been made to strengthen independent national youth councils, older persons' organizations and advocacy groups for persons with disabilities. Efforts have also been made to promote the civic and political engagement of indigenous people. Programmes to improve intergenerational communication, such as senior volunteers mentoring youth or young people assisting older persons in nursing homes, are also being recognized as effective in building up intergenerational solidarity.

18. Between 2009 and 2050, the number of people aged 60 or older is expected to increase from 264 million to 416 million in developed countries, and from 473 million to 1.6 billion in developing countries.[5] These demographic changes pose major policy challenges for the provision of adequate income support and appropriate health-care services for older persons.[6] Lack of access to health care remains a persistent concern in many developing countries. There is a discernible movement towards policies and programmes that increase long-term care benefits and services and enhance training in geriatrics and gerontology. On the other hand, limited progress has been made in creating greater awareness of and preventing the abuse of older persons.[7]

19. The participation of older persons in the workplace has increased, and the employment rates of older persons in a number of countries members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, for example, have risen significantly since 2000. However, those older persons wishing to continue to be economically active face difficulties in accessing employment as well as education and training opportunities. An increasing number of developing countries have extended some form of social protection to older persons to improve their income security. HelpAge International reports that 72 countries — 46 of which are low- or middle-income countries — have instituted a social pension.[8]

20. Guided by the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond,[9] national and regional frameworks have focused mainly on improving access by young people to education, health care, employment and participation in decision-making on relevant and important issues, including the environment, globalization, the use of new technologies, the impact of HIV/AIDS, delinquency and drug abuse. Across regions, educational attainment has expanded along with the rise in youth literacy rates, especially for girls and young women. Education,

[4] See A/64/127.

[5] Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *World Population Prospects: The 2008 Revision*, Highlights (2009), Working Paper No. ESA/P/WP.210.

[6] A/64/127.

[7] Ibid.

[8] http://www.helpage.org/Researchandpolicy/PensionWatch.

[9] See General Assembly resolution 50/81.

combined with access to new technologies, has enabled young people in many countries to contribute to defining national priorities to an extent that had previously not been possible. Nevertheless, access to quality education and decent jobs remains the primary concern for young people as they transition from childhood to adulthood. Strengthening and consolidating the participation of young people and promoting their civic and political engagement remains essential to their successful social integration.

21. Following the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, many countries revisited their policies on the social inclusion of persons with disabilities. A central tenet of such policies is the identification and removal of physical, economic and cultural barriers that prevent persons with disabilities from participating in mainstream social activities. Improved access to health services, education and training, transportation, information and communication are common objectives. Despite the progress made in a number of countries, incorporating accessibility requirements at all levels of policymaking and programming remains a challenge. To a significant extent, that shortcoming can be attributed to the lack of participation by persons with disabilities in the process.

22. The adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples[10] by the General Assembly in 2007 generated renewed impetus for and provided guidance to the process of advancing the social inclusion of indigenous peoples. Similarly, the 2008 official apologies to indigenous peoples issued by the Governments of Australia and of Canada recognized past injustices and marked a move away from laws and policies of forced assimilation. They also brought into sharper focus the need to close gaps in life expectancy, educational achievement and economic opportunity between indigenous and non-indigenous populations. The core issues of indigenous land ownership and the preservation of indigenous cultural heritage have not been adequately addressed. Anti-discrimination measures and policies promoting the empowerment of indigenous peoples through effective participation in decision-making have not yet taken root in most countries with indigenous populations.

23. While policies for social integration should address the specific barriers to inclusion faced by each group, the groups share common concerns. In particular, their concerns focus on the issues of empowerment, equality, inclusion and participation; for most groups, discrimination, the persistence of societal biases and stereotypes remain major obstacles to social integration. The groups also share more specific concerns, such as access to quality education and health care and to decent work.

B. Current regional and national priorities and strategies to promote social integration

24. Regional and national social integration strategies were developed to tackle the most urgent priorities. For most of the developing world, the provision of basic services, including education and health care, is central to advancing social integration. In some countries, priority is given to policies designed to overcome entrenched discrimination; in others, Governments focus on improving the situation of specific, vulnerable groups. Attempts have been made to create evaluation frameworks to monitor policies that aim to promote inclusion.

[10] General Assembly resolution 61/295, annex.

Africa

25. The "African Common Position on Social Integration" adopted at the meeting of African Union ministers in charge of social development held in Windhoek in October 2008 emphasizes that social cohesion rests on universal access to education and skills development, health, shelter, urban development, environmental protection, food and water security and appropriate nutrition. Faced with the reality that in the majority of African countries 50 to 70 per cent of people live in extreme poverty, the reduction of poverty through access to basic services, mainly health and education and some forms of basic social protection, is seen as essential for social integration.

26. Basic literacy and numeracy are prerequisites for effective economic and social participation and appropriate investments in basic education for all. While they are not in themselves sufficient to overcome social exclusion, they are universally seen as indispensable to the promotion of social integration. Given that such investments have generally focused on increasing enrolment rates, that approach has sometimes had unintended consequences, including larger class sizes, insufficient teaching materials, a decline in the quality of teaching and higher dropout rates. The imposition of "user fees" in many developing countries, often promoted on the grounds of efficiency and cost recovery, has sometimes limited gains in enrolment.

27. In many developing countries with a nominal system for the universal provision of basic services, evidence points to the existence of a dual system consisting of the public service, which is free and universal but generally underfunded and neglected, and a private system based on payment of fees for services. That duality is particularly evident in African countries. While people with sufficient resources generally use the private sector to gain access to health and education services, people who lack sufficient resources also increasingly resort to private provision because public services do not meet their needs. It has been observed that education and health care, instead of being planned and financed domestically as a priority for social inclusion and a matter of social justice, are gradually becoming donor-funded through programme support. This may, in effect, reduce national commitments to inclusiveness and solidarity.

28. While the need to shift to more encompassing social provisioning remains urgent, a retrenchment of State capacity for social budgeting has been observed in Africa in the past two decades. Considerable entitlement failure is directly linked to the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS across many countries. Reductions in social expenditure are thought to have brought about a crisis of citizenship and statehood in most African countries.[11] There is little doubt that the continuing retrenchment of State capacity threatens social inclusion.

29. Several African countries have introduced new contributory insurance schemes as well as some basic forms of social protection, with South Africa and Namibia instituting tax-financed basic pension systems and Lesotho providing a non-contributory universal old-age pension. Cash transfer programmes are expanding as well,[12] such as the Food Subsidy Programme in Mozambique or the Productive Safety Net Programme in

[11] 'Jimí O. Adésinà, "Social Policy and the Quest for Inclusive Development: Research Findings from Sub-Saharan Africa", United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, Geneva, May 2007.

[12] http://www.ipc-undp.org/PageNewSiteb.do?id=120&active=3.

Ethiopia. South Africa has consolidated programmes focusing on cash transfers to different target groups, including older persons and orphans; the coverage of its child grants system was substantially extended over the last decade to more than 4 million beneficiaries.[13]

Asia and the Pacific

30. Given the large number of unemployed young people, the social integration of youth is a growing priority in Asia-Pacific countries. Many of them have adopted national youth policies with a focus on education, employment and health. The implementation of such policies remains limited owing to the lack of commitments, resources, coordination and implementation mechanisms.[14]

31. Regarding migration, several Governments promote overseas deployment and the placement of their workforce and are actively involved in the protection of their overseas workers.[15] Few countries in the region have ratified the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, and therefore few migrants in the region benefit from its protection.

32. As the number of older persons is increasing rapidly in several countries, including China, where their number is expected to double between 2005 and 2015, meeting the need for social security, living arrangements and health care is a growing concern. Regional frameworks for the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, including the Shanghai Implementation Strategy and the Macao Plan of Action on Ageing for Asia and the Pacific, recommend actions on priority areas to advance the social integration of older persons.

33. In South Asia, barriers to social integration arise from social stratification in the form of castes as well as ethnic, racial, religious and cultural groups. In countries with a caste system, social inclusion policies have focused on promoting greater access to public institutions. In India, quotas exist for admission to schools and employment in Government services for the lower castes, and a number of seats in Parliament are reserved for Dalits. Afghanistan has made efforts towards the inclusion of women, mostly through the provision of free education for girls. So far, such measures have had a limited impact on the situation of women owing to prevalent exclusionary practices and customs.

Latin America

34. In Latin America, traditional sources of exclusion are increasingly compounded by new forms of exclusion associated with democratization, economic transformation and globalization. Indigenous peoples, by far the most excluded group in the region, face systematic discrimination that reduces their ability to benefit from and contribute to development. Against that background, anti-discriminatory measures have been taken in several countries in relation to access to health, housing, education, financial credit and political participation, with varying levels of success.

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[13] See International Labour Organization, report of the Tripartite meeting of experts on strategies for the extension of social security coverage: "Extending Social Security to All — A review of challenges, present practice and strategic options", Geneva, 2-4 September 2009.

[14] United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Fact sheet on youth, 2007.

[15] Including Bangladesh, Indonesia, the Philippines and Sri Lanka (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Fact sheet on International Migration, 2007).

35. Social inclusion policy initiatives in Latin America focus largely on remedying the effects of past discrimination through affirmative action programmes.[16] To promote the inclusion of women and tackle the persistent problem of their marginalization, disempowerment and underrepresentation in the political process, a number of Latin American Governments have adopted gender quotas for national elections.[17] On average, such laws have improved women's political participation by 9 per cent. The success of quotas in a number of countries, such as Argentina and Costa Rica, indicates that the State can promote parity in decision-making.[18]

36. In many Latin American countries, cash transfer programmes have been successfully built into broader social protection strategies. Targeted social transfers are well established in the region, and several programmes such as Bolsa Família, in Brazil; Oportunidades, in Mexico; and Chile Solidario exemplify that approach. They aim to promote active citizenship and the capacity to defend rights and live up to obligations and duties.

37. Such programmes are credited with successfully meeting basic welfare objectives, namely, reducing short-term poverty through directed expenditures, decreasing malnutrition (stunting) among young children, increasing educational enrolment, lowering dropout and repetition rates, and reducing child labour.[19] Some attribute recent declines in inequality in Latin America, as measured by the Gini coefficient, to government monetary and in-kind transfers.

38. Despite many inclusionary characteristics, social transfer programmes, and conditional cash transfers in particular, have not yet proved effective in ensuring inclusion and poverty reduction within a broader policy context. Critics note that conditional cash transfers to families with children, where women are the main beneficiaries, are restrictive of other groups, including those excluded spatially, persons with disabilities or older persons. An evaluation of conditional cash transfers and their contribution to the promotion of social inclusion indicates that they do bring about improvements in education rates and health outcomes, and have been linked to reductions in child labour.[20] Concerns remain, however, about how such programmes are implemented: to be most effective, cash transfer programmes should not treat beneficiaries in a paternalistic way or as recipients of charity, but should be founded on a rights-based approach that regards access to education and health care as an entitlement of citizenship.

Developed countries

39. Social integration in Europe is promoted at both the national and regional levels. Under the open method of coordination of the European Union, common

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[16] Inter-American Development Bank, *Outsiders? The Changing Patterns of Exclusion in Latin America and the Caribbean*, Washington, D.C., 2008.

[17] National electoral gender quotas have been instituted in Argentina, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay and Peru. See Mayra Buvinić and Jacqueline Mazza with Ruthanne Deutsch (eds.), *Inclusion and economic development in Latin America*, Inter-American Development Bank, Washington, D.C., 2004, p. 336.

[18] Ibid.

[19] International Labour Organization, *Social protection and inclusion: Experiences and policy issues*, Geneva, 2006.

[20] International Labour Office, *Child labour and conditional cash transfer programmes in Latin America*, December 2007.

objectives are set, national policies developed and outcomes reported.[21] Social integration policies in the European Union focus mainly on the legal enforcement of anti-discrimination laws; preferential group-targeted programmes and comprehensive spatially targeted interventions. Policies often focus on vulnerable or disadvantaged groups, linguistic or ethnic minorities, the homeless, persons with disabilities and migrants. Social integration policies for groups include targeted employment, housing and welfare assistance and bilingual and civic education for immigrants.

40. In several European Union member States, social exclusion units have been established to tackle the manifestations of spatial exclusion such as neglected housing, high prevalence of crime, unemployment, inadequate schools and general community breakdown.

41. Attempts have been made to develop "social capital" through the provision of resources for community development. Such initiatives are aimed at supporting the development of community networks, mutual help and civic engagement, as well as a sense of community identity and solidarity. The strength of community networks has been linked to more effective and responsive public institutions, local economic development and prosperity. It is hoped that developing social capital will provide a more holistic response to social exclusion.

42. As in developing countries, policies fostering economic independence through labour market participation are a common priority for European Union member countries and have often proved effective in restoring people's employability. Concern has been raised that a possible side effect of such policies is decreased recognition of other socially useful types of work, such as child rearing by mothers or voluntary and informal work by those outside the formal labour market.[22]

43. Australia has recently developed a policy design and delivery toolkit for policies aimed at increasing individual and community resources, opportunities and capabilities through investments in skills development, education and training. Implementation and monitoring frameworks are to be developed with special emphasis on coordination among Government departments and other stakeholders.[23] A number of Government departments have already established social inclusion units to guide implementation, and the Australian Social Inclusion Board was created in 2008. Current priorities for Australian social inclusion policies include children at risk of disadvantage, disengaged young people, jobless families and those with locational disadvantage.[24]

44. Closing the gap for indigenous Australians is a priority as well. The Social Inclusion Principles for Australia state that, in addition to initiatives to improve health, education, housing and employment prospects, recognizing the varied and positive contributions of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds will also be an important feature of the social inclusion approach.[25]

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[21] Eric Marlier, A. B. Atkinson, Bea Cantillon and Brian Nolan, *The EU and Social Inclusion: Facing the Challenges*, Policy Press, United Kingdom, 2007.

[22] Rik van Berkel and Iver Hornemann Møller, eds. *Active Social Policies in the EU: Inclusion through Participation?*, Policy Press, United Kingdom, 2002, p. 134.

[23] The Australian Public Service Social Inclusion policy design and delivery toolkit, Commonwealth of Australia, 2009; available at www.socialinclusion.gov.au/Documents/SIToolKit.pdf.

[24] Social Inclusion Ministers Meeting communiqué, Adelaide, 18 September 2009; available at www.deewr.gov.au.

[25] Australian Government, Social Inclusion Principles for Australia; available at http://www.socialinclusion.gov.au/SIAgenda/Principles/Documents/SIPrincilpes.pdf.

45. As in Australia, multiculturalism constitutes a basic tenet of Canadian society and is a basis for the formulation and enactment of social policies, including those aimed at removing barriers to participation and promoting equal treatment and protection while respecting and valuing diversity. The strengthening of indigenous cultural identity through the provision of support to indigenous youth centres in urban areas and the promotion of community involvement and cross-cultural awareness is seen as contributing to social cohesion. Multicultural education is part of a larger complex of policies addressing social and cultural inequality in Canada. School curricula are developed to promote tolerance and respect for diversity, with a curriculum on world citizenship to educate future responsible citizens.

46. In the United States, social inclusion policies have focused on expanding opportunity, helping the most vulnerable and strengthening families. Recent efforts were made to reinforce anti-discrimination laws, particularly in relation to employment. Affirmative action policies, a policy tool for both the federal Government and many state authorities since the 1960s, have helped to equalize opportunities for individuals from disadvantaged ethnic communities, women, persons with disabilities and veterans. The validity of affirmative action policies has been increasingly questioned, and they have been gradually revised to address concerns of possible reverse discrimination.[26]

C. Social inclusion evaluation frameworks

47. The World Social Summit noted that the implementation of its Programme of Action at the national level required defining time-bound goals and targets for enhancing social integration within the national context, as well as developing quantitative and qualitative indicators of social development, including social integration, to monitor the impact of social policies and programmes and improve their effectiveness.

48. Many evaluation frameworks aimed at analysing and measuring the multiple dimensions of social inclusion have been developed at local levels. At the regional level, the work on social inclusion indicators has been advanced primarily by the European Union. Besides income, the European System of Social Indicators comprises the long-term unemployment rate, persons living in jobless households, early school leavers not in education or training, life expectancy at birth, self-defined status by income level and Gini coefficient. In addition, indicators are being developed that span disparities, inequalities and social exclusion. Another area under consideration is to strengthen social relations, social and political activities and engagement, quality of social relations and quality of societal institutions.

49. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development *Society at a Glance* provides indicators of social exclusion/inclusion, such as maternal deprivation, earnings inequality, gender wage gaps, public social spending, poverty persistence and old-age pensions. The Migrant Integration Policy Index measures policies to integrate migrants in 25 European Union member States and three non-European Union countries. It includes more than 100 policy indicators focusing mostly on barriers to integration such as access to employment, family reunion

[26] See www.usa.gov.

possibilities, access to citizenship through naturalization, participation and anti-discrimination measures.[27]

50. Besides long-term unemployment and income poverty, other indicators used to measure social exclusion include: social breakdown of traditional households, homelessness, crime, political disempowerment, including low registration of voters and low voter turnout, low levels of community activity, social disorder, educational underachievement and low skills and spatial concentration of marginalized groups in neglected areas.[28]

III. Social integration policies promoting inclusion through empowerment

A. Redistributive policies

51. Poverty eradication, full employment and social integration are interrelated and mutually reinforcing. Improvements in one area usually bring about improvements in the others. It is often assumed that if poverty is not tackled through the fulfilment of basic needs, social integration will remain an elusive goal, as many people are not integrated in society simply because they live in extreme poverty. Thus, policies to alleviate poverty and fight exclusion usually focus on the redistribution of resources to individuals or households in need.

52. From a social integration perspective, however, poverty is not limited to financial resources insufficient to maintain a decent standard of living. It also encompasses deprivation in the areas of education, health, and housing, which effectively means non-participation in certain spheres of life. Thus poverty is a form of exclusion that should be tackled in a holistic manner, and the provision of universal basic services in the areas of health, education and, increasingly, social protection should be seen as means of fighting poverty and exclusion and promoting social integration.

53. As part of a broader decent work agenda, social protection is indispensable for advancing social inclusion. Social protection systems, including social transfers, play a critical role in giving people access to basic services, thereby contributing to their employability and productivity. Such systems may prevent people faced with sickness, unemployment, disability or old age from falling into poverty and social exclusion. Effective social transfers enable societies to utilize their full potential for both economic growth and social well-being. Social transfers are viewed as both social and economic investments, promoting economic security and supporting decent work.

54. Despite a growing consensus that social transfers can advance social integration and prevent people from falling into poverty and social exclusion, 80 per cent of the world's population still does not have access to adequate social protection. The concept of a social protection floor is currently being promoted by the United Nations Chief Executives Board for Coordination, under the leadership

[27] http://www.integrationindex.eu/.

[28] Compilation of existing approaches to capture, analyse and measure the multiple dimensions of social inclusion and other related concepts; available at http://social.un.org/compilation/compilation_list.asp.

of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the World Health Organization. A social protection floor is intended to ensure a set of publicly financed essential social services and social security benefits for all, including access to basic health care, income security for the elderly and the disabled, child benefits and income security, combined with employment guarantees for the poor in active age.

55. According to ILO, it is possible to finance most of the basic elements of a social protection floor, even in low-income countries. It is estimated that with an investment of about 4 per cent of gross domestic product in basic child benefits and universal pensions, the poverty headcount could be reduced by up to 40 per cent in poor countries in Africa. An ILO study of 80 national social cash transfer programmes showed that they already reach between 150 and 200 million beneficiaries. The study concludes that such transfers have a positive impact by reducing poverty, improving health, nutrition and the social status of recipients, notably women, increasing economic activity and entrepreneurial small-scale investments, notably in agriculture, and thereby contributing to social integration.

56. Investing in education for all is instrumental for social integration. Educational systems are usually designed to respond to the needs of markets, but they should also be responsive to the cultural and social needs of people. As such, they should promote freedom of expression, tolerance, equity, responsibilities, rights and obligations as good citizens. Education for democracy is essential, too. It involves instilling democratic values and principles, informing citizens of their rights and inculcating a sense of responsibility for the well-being of a community and society at large. Multicultural education, including teaching mutual respect and tolerance and doing away with prejudice and stereotypes, is also essential to social integration.

57. Social integration policies tend to be most critical at particular stages of people's lives, when life transitions may make them prone to economic or social exclusion. Investments are especially important when young people are at school, enter first jobs, form families or exercise citizenship.[29] For older persons, the transition to retirement and dependence in old age or widowhood can increase vulnerability. Strategies should focus not only on ensuring income but also on providing social and emotional support. Migrant individuals and families, whether temporary or permanent, may be at a greater risk of exclusion, as they may lose traditional support networks and might face discrimination in access to employment and services. Policies aimed at promoting the inclusion of migrants in the institutions and social networks of the host society and at expanding their opportunities for economic and civic engagement are investments in building a more cohesive society.

B. Combating discrimination: promoting and protecting individual rights

58. A human rights approach to development acknowledges that poverty stems at least in part from exclusion, discrimination and disempowerment, and that the fulfilment of fundamental citizenship rights lies at the core of inclusion.

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[29] The World Bank, *World Development Report 2007: Development and the Next Generation* (Washington, D.C., 2006).

59. Social integration cannot be advanced so long as basic needs go unfulfilled. The recent adoption of the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights reaffirmed that access to adequate food, health, housing, education and work belongs to the realm of fundamental human rights and is not the outcome of elective charity. Similarly, the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples points to the promotion and protection of all human rights as an integral part of, and an effective tool for, advancing social integration.

60. Not only is discrimination unacceptable from an ethical point of view, but racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination also hamper effective market functioning on a macro level. Stigmatization, marginalization and humiliation also deny people's essential humanity, making it difficult for them to be fully productive citizens.[30]

61. Measures aimed at fighting discrimination based on gender, race, ethnicity or residence are needed not only to promote integration, but also to complement anti-poverty and economic development programmes. Measures to combat gender discrimination, the most persistent form of discrimination and a shared concern in all regions, are perhaps the most urgent to advance social integration in many societies.

62. Barriers to equal opportunities are often embedded in social, legal and political institutions, requiring structural change, outside intervention or affirmative action. Some anti-discrimination policies focus on groups suffering the greatest discrimination. These are most common in India, Malaysia, South Africa, the United States of America and several other societies with large minority groups. A few European countries also pursue affirmative action policies for ethnic minorities. Agrarian reforms are sometimes regarded as affirmative action policies as well when favouring indigenous populations in Latin America or landless and small farmers.

63. Policies and programmes to promote the legal empowerment of the poor and other disadvantaged groups have the potential to contribute to social integration as well. The legal empowerment approach enables the poor to use the law to advance their rights and interests as citizens and economic actors, in particular with respect to protecting their assets, accessing property and benefiting from the protection of labour standards. Other legal courses of action include provisions for legal identity and birth registration, repealing or modifying laws that are biased against the poor, facilitating the creation of civil society organizations and establishing effective and impartial policing.[31] Legal empowerment is part of a broad empowerment agenda focusing on fighting discrimination and promoting participation of people living in poverty in all aspects of the life of a society. An empowerment agenda, including legal empowerment, should encompass other disadvantaged groups as well.

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[30] Mayra Buvinić and Jacqueline Mazza with Ruthanne Deutsch (eds.), *Inclusion and economic development in Latin America*, Inter-American Development Bank, Washington, D.C., 2004, p. 136.

[31] See A/64/133.

C. Participatory policies

64. When addressing social relations within the specific context of their societies, Governments may focus on the extent to which people are able to participate in social life and have enough power to influence the decisions affecting their lives. When denied the opportunity to participate, people are disempowered. Such disengagement may lead to growing distrust of public authorities and institutions and, eventually, to social disorder. The promotion of active participation in civic, social, economic and political activities by individuals at both the local and national levels is essential for everyone in society and is an integral part of promoting social integration. Citizens and social groups should have opportunities and the capacity to participate in discussions relevant to their concerns.

65. Citizens' participation is not limited to taking part in periodic elections. People should be included at all levels of governance, including deliberations on the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of public policies. Where there are barriers to such participation, including lack of financial resources or lack of information and incentives, support for consultative and oversight systems are needed. Capacity-building for local governments, voter education, information campaigns and awareness-raising among groups typically marginalized are especially important. With the proliferation of grass-roots movements, support for other institutions of civic engagement such as tenants' organizations, school governing bodies, advocacy groups and others should be strengthened as well, as they influence decision-making and the quality of local life. People also need to be assured that their participation will be protected and not lead to retribution against them.

66. Socially integrative strategies should build active and informed citizens. To be a citizen is to be a full member of a political community, with the rights and obligations related to such membership. The development of responsible citizenship is a good socially integrative strategy that not only enhances social capital and promotes government accountability, but also improves overall participation and inclusion. Consequently, it is important to promote educational systems and social institutions that cultivate good citizens, citizens who hold public officials accountable for their actions, demand social justice, accept people who are different and build solidarity with other members of the community and beyond. Teaching the value of responsible citizenship should be part of all school curricula and be actively included in policies relating to young people, through measures such as lowering the voting age, establishing youth councils and consultative bodies, military service, and national and community service.[29]

67. To move towards the goal of social integration, broad-based participation and engagement on the part of diverse populations in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all areas are necessary. Inclusive policies alone will not automatically produce the expected impacts on the ground, however, and require an appropriate environment and mechanisms for implementation.

68. Citizen participation and engagement in general can have a considerable impact on the public policy discourse and the policies that are enacted. Even on issues with a high technical content, citizens can play an active role in choosing options through a transparent process. Citizen action can lead to highlighting social interests and goals and advance the overall common good.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

A. Conclusions

69. The goal of creating a "society for all" remains elusive, with many individuals and social groups continuing to face discrimination, subject to extreme poverty, barred from decent jobs, invisible, voiceless and excluded from decision-making processes. Deprivation in childhood, family disintegration, unemployment, lack of access to health care and education, inadequate housing, violence and crime are daily experiences for many people. Their experiences, and the underlying causes, are an indication that in most societies social integration remains unachieved.

70. In spite of the compelling vision proclaimed in the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, social integration has not been well understood or effectively operationalized. Although frameworks have been adopted at the regional and national levels, there have been few attempts to mainstream social integration into national development planning. Since the World Summit for Social Development, several mandates have been established to address the situation of marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities, older persons, young people and indigenous peoples. Normative frameworks, however, will not diminish discrimination, stereotyping, cultural biases, abuse and violence if they are not complemented by explicit policy measures and the strict enforcement of anti-discriminatory laws to remove barriers to social integration. The gap between the establishment of normative instruments and actual implementation has to be closed. Social integration is also more than the sum of a series of normative frameworks for specific social groups. A more analytical perspective, based on the assumption that issues of social inclusion cut across many groups, should emerge to guide further social integration efforts. There are no blueprints for successful social integration policies. Governments and all stakeholders will have to develop their own strategies, not only to tackle the most urgent manifestations of exclusion, but also to place them in the context of coherent policies that advance the broad social integration agenda. Such comprehensive, holistic and integrated policies should be based on the assumption that societies should reconcile market forces with a commitment to solidarity, mutual support, protection and empowerment of their members. The success of such strategies will depend on the political will, institutional capacity and strength of the alliances established to pursue this goal.

71. Economic growth alone will not lead to social integration. Unless the benefits of growth are distributed more equitably and the basic principles of social justice respected, growth may actually lead to increased inequality. To give meaning to social integration, policymakers should increase their understanding of the relationship between macroeconomic policies, external shocks and impacts on inequality, exclusion and vulnerability. National social policy does not happen in isolation. Global trends, economic policy, structural constraints and donors' expectations all influence national social policy. That is why the design of policies promoting social integration should be pursued within an international framework that is coherent, participatory and accountable, and whereby national priorities, the interests of the various stakeholders and international aid efforts are explicitly considered and integrated.

72. Since the obstacles to social inclusion lie in social, economic, political and cultural institutions and practices, long-term structural causes impeding social

integration should be recognized and addressed as a fundamental aspect of inclusive development. A broader vision of social policy is central to the advancement of inclusive development. Policies promoting social integration should include redistributive measures aimed at ensuring better access to universal basic services. They should encompass rights-based approaches, with special emphasis on anti-discrimination, participation and strategies to promote decent work. The objectives of social inclusion should be mainstreamed into existing policies and programmes, including regulatory framework and economic planning.

73. Inclusive development requires mechanisms that facilitate participation and partnership. Government entities such as social inclusion units and boards or community response task forces responsible for social integration should be established or strengthened. Policies enhancing broad-based and genuine participation and engagement of diverse populations in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all social, economic, political and cultural facets of life are of crucial importance. An inclusive approach, sometimes called a "whole of government" or "joined-up" approach, necessitates strong partnerships among all levels of Government, businesses and community organizations so as to address economic and social priorities and policies. Local government is key to the implementation of social integration policies and to the mobilization and coordination of actors at different levels. Commitment to policy is not the domain of Governments alone. A vibrant civil society and responsible private sector must have a stake in social integration and help build it.

74. Policy responses should also be evidence-based and subject to ongoing revision, based on monitoring. Evaluation frameworks, including specific indicators at the international and national levels, should be developed to assess progress and to identify gaps. Indicators should identify the nature of the problem, be statistically validated and provide feedback for policy interventions. They should also be measurable and comparable across countries, as well as disaggregated by gender, age and other characteristics. It must also be recognized that a fundamental source of evidence for social policy resides in social groups within communities. Evidence should be collected using participatory, qualitative methodologies that can provide insight into statistical data.

75. To make social integration central to the development agenda, it is necessary to acknowledge that working towards social integration goes beyond the implementation of group-specific mandates; it is central to fighting poverty and unemployment and creating a society for all, the ultimate goal of development. Social integration policies should serve as a tool that allows policymakers to address continuing economic and social crises. The recent global economic and social crises are a stark reminder that globalization and the increasing interdependence of societies call for bold social policy action and safeguards that seek to ensure that all people are integrated in and benefit from the process of global development.

B. Recommendations

76. **Social integration policies should be concomitantly pursued at the normative, institutional and programmatic levels. At the normative level, legal frameworks must ensure equal treatment of citizens, regardless of personal or**

group-based attributes. At the institutional level, Member States should create institutions that facilitate consultation with citizens in the development and implementation of social integration policies. At the programmatic level, specific policies should be designed to promote the integration of marginalized individuals and groups.

National level

77. Governments are encouraged to adopt a coherent approach to economic and social policymaking and to ensure accountability and transparency. Governments should enhance and institutionalize coordination in promoting the mainstreaming of social integration in all government ministries.

78. Social integration policies should be embedded in a human rights framework. Governments are encouraged to harmonize their national legislation with the international human rights instruments to which they are a party and enforce their implementation at the national and local levels. Barriers and obstacles to economic, social and civic participation must be identified and removed as a matter of priority.

79. Governments should ensure access to quality basic education for all and include multicultural, human rights and citizenship education to reduce discrimination, enable people to claim their rights and promote responsible citizenship. While basic education is crucial for laying the foundations required for social integration, it is insufficient for integration into the globalized economy. Emphasis should be given to expanding access to quality secondary education, particularly for girls and young women.

80. Governments should establish basic social protection schemes for both the formal and informal sectors so as to promote equity, inclusion, cohesion and stability in society. Social protection programmes should be designed to protect people throughout the life course, as well as to support the poor and most vulnerable, especially during periods of macroeconomic instability. All countries are encouraged to put in place a social protection floor.

81. Governments should pursue civic engagement and broad-based participation in the formulation and review of socio-economic policies and ensure that the views of all stakeholders are represented. To support an inclusive policy framework, all levels and departments of Government should integrate consultation and ongoing social dialogue with all stakeholders.

82. Governments should draw on existing instruments concerning social groups, notably the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, to develop appropriate national policies and ensure their full implementation. To promote an inclusive approach, Governments are encouraged to conduct a joint review of the implementation of all social-group-related programmes and policies.

83. Governments are encouraged to develop national evaluation frameworks for social integration, including benchmarks and indicators.

International level

84. **The United Nations system should continue to facilitate an exchange of experiences and good practices encompassing practical strategies to promote participation, anti-discrimination, redistribution and other measures that effectively operationalize social integration.**

85. **Member States and United Nations programmes, funds and specialized agencies should continue to support the Social Protection Floor Initiative as an effective tool for social integration. The manual and strategic framework for joint United Nations country operations that was developed through an inter-agency initiative should be fully utilized to enable the United Nations system to assist Member States, at their request, in designing basic social protection measures, taking into account national ownership and circumstances.**

86. **The international community is encouraged to reflect on the current mandates guiding action on the social inclusion of groups and consider the commonalities found between them in order to advance the full implementation of those mandates in a coordinated manner.**